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Chairman: Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued) (A/46/65, 282, 440-445, 521, 522; A/SPC/46/L.23-L.29)

1. Mr. EL KHATIB (Morocco), speaking on behalf of Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, the member States of the Arab Maghreb Union, said that they were seriously concerned over the intransigent Israeli policies outlined in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/46/522), which violated the relevant United Nations resolutions as well as the international human rights instruments and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (the Fourth Geneva Convention). The Israeli Government was deliberately establishing Jewish settlements on confiscated land in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the Golan Heights in order ultimately to alter the demographic composition of the occupied Arab territories. Whereas in April 1991 it had reportedly been allocating one quarter of its Housing Ministry budget to the construction of new settlements, it had recently announced that by 1991 construction in the occupied territories would account for one half of the budget, and that the settlement process was irreversible.

2. The annexation policy was reinforced by a policy of repression that made daily life unlivable for the Arab populations. The freedom of movement of Palestinian citizens in Israel was curtailed, as was freedom of expression throughout the occupied Arab territories, particularly through a ban on the publication of Arab newspapers in the territories and censorship of even the few newspapers allowed to publish in East Jerusalem. Educational institutions remained closed. Thousands of Palestinians, many of them children, had been detained or imprisoned; and the prisoners lived in inhuman conditions, as attested to by the many hunger strikes throughout the year. The occupying Power had continued to divert water from the occupied Arab territories for its own use or that of its settlers, and to restrict the use of water in territories, to the detriment of the health, environment and economy of the Palestinian people.

3. The countries of the Arab Mahgreb Union deplored the situation prevailing in the occupied Arab territories, and would have hoped, at a time when freedom and human rights were gaining greater respect throughout the world, that the Israeli Government would finally recognize the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. A new era in Israeli-Palestinian relations ought to begin in the wake of the Madrid peace conference, favouring dialogue and trust based on a respect for the human rights of the Arab population, and leading eventually to a valid solution. The countries of the Arab Maghreb Union reaffirmed their support for the Palestinian people in its struggle, under the leadership of its legitimate representative, the Palestine

(Mr. El Khatib, Morocco)

Liberation Organization, to regain its dignity and establish its own independent and sovereign State.

4. Mr. AL-RASSI (Saudi Arabia) said that the summary contained in the Special Committee's report (A/46/522) made it apparent that the human rights situation in the occupied territories continued to deteriorate. Moreover, and despite the Madrid peace conference, settlements were still being built in the occupied Arab territories, while in a bid to hamper the peace process, the Israeli Knesset had resolved not to negotiate over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. The repressive actions and measures taken by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories, including acts of killing, imprisonment and detention, explusions, demolition of housing ahd closure of schools and universities, would not deter the Palestinian people from demanding their right to self-determination. The Israeli military police had recently stormed the Islamic court building in Jerusalem, confiscating personal files and other documents relating to properties owned by Islamic religious endowments, the aim being to erase the Arab and Islamic character of Jerusalem and continue the Judaization of the city.

5. Document A/46/522 also described the inhumane prison conditions and the worsening medical situation in the occupied territories. His delegation supported the Special Committee's recommendations for urgent action to guarantee the basic human rights of the Palestinian people and implement the Fourth Geneva Convention. His Government supported the right of the Palestinian people to return to its land and determine its own fate, while also endorsing all international efforts designed to achieve a just and permanent settlement of the Palestinian issue. He hoped that all the parties concerned had the will for peace and that the principles of justice, freedom and the right to self-determination would prevail.

6. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic) said he was not surprised that Israel had ignored requests to cooperate with the Special Committee, given its continued deliberate and flagrant violation of international law and international conventions, treaties and agreements, and its refusal to implement United Nations resolutions. The Syrian Government's report to the Special Committee (A/46/284) demonstrated Israel's policy of Judaizing and annexing the occupied Syrian Arab Golan through its expansion of existing Israeli settlements. It also documented the confiscation of Syrian-owned territory and other measures which had adversely affected agriculture, industry, education and employment. In addition, the country's heritage had been systematically destroyed and plundered.

7. In response to the resistance of the Syrian people in the occupied Golan, the Israeli authorities had stepped up their repressive activities, some of which were related in document A/46/475, violating human rights and fundamental freedoms in so doing. Israel was challenging international law by refusing to implement United Nations resolutions, just as the imposition of

(Mr. Khani, Syrian Arab Republic)

its own laws and administration in the area was illegal. His Government looked to the international community to exert the utmost pressure to curtail the practices of the Israeli occupying authorities, their violations of human rights and their wrongful trial and imprisonment of Syrian citizens, whose only crime had been to refuse the imposition of Israeli laws.

8. According to the report on Israeli land and water practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (A/46/263-E/1991/88), the area of Arab irrigated land had diminished, while economic and living standards continued to deteriorate. Such practices were integral to Israel's settlement policy and instrumental to the imposition of Israeli land control.

9. Due to Israeli settlement policies, the Israeli population in the Golan had increased three times as much as the non-Israeli population between 1983 and 1988. The economic difficulties experienced by the Arab population in the Golan had also been exacerbated as a result of having to share limited agricultural and water resources with Israeli settlers. The sale of apples, the only marketable product grown in the Golan, had been subject to restrictions and competition from Israeli settlers. Moreover, the area of Arab-owned farming land had decreased, particularly since it had been used to accommodate Israeli settlements, factories and research centres. As an overall consequence of such policies, development potential was affected and the level of income from agriculture had dropped.

10. His delegation would have liked to see fuller coverage in the Special Committee's report of Israel's increasing violations of international law and its harsh racist practices aimed at subjugating or evicting the Arab population which had been described in document A/46/284. A further effect of Israel's practices had been to create thousands of refugees and emigrants whom it refused to allow home, in violation of resolution 194 (1948) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967). Moreover, its constant settlement of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel in the occupied territories deliberately violated paragraph 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Although the list of inhumane Israeli practices was lengthy, it was to be hoped that the wrongdoings aimed at justifying occupation and annexation would be superseded by a just and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which would liberate the occupied territory and guarantee the national rights of the Palestinian people.

11. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) said it was to be hoped that the item under consideration would not appear on next year's agenda, in view of the Madrid peace conference and the approaching bilateral talks, which heralded a new stage in Middle Eastern history and provided a basis for achieving a just and peaceful solution to the problem. The Special Committee's report illustrated that the circumstances of the Palestinians living under occupation were deteriorating, despite the inescapable obligations of Israel, as the occupying authority, under international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. He

(Mr. Galal, Egypt)

expressed his delegation's serious concern over Israel's repressive treatment of Palestinian demonstrators and its denial of their right to defend themselves against charges brought, as well as over the mass oppression which assumed various forms. Israel should immediately return the documents recently seized from the Islamic court building in Jerusalem and honour its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and should reconsider its position of non-cooperation with the Special Committee.

12. The Madrid peace conference was the first step towards a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. All parties should accept that right and justice were the only basis for peace and security. He reiterated the need to build trust between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples as the way forward to dialogue and understanding, thereby ultimately allowing energies to be re-channelled into developing the countries of the region.

13. Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) said that the report of the Special Committee eloquently described the difficult conditions of the Palestinians and other Arabs living in the occupied territories. There had been no improvement in their situation in the past year, and their basic human rights had been repeatedly violated by the Israeli occupying authorities. That was a matter of grave concern to the international community. Moreover, the occupying authorities had recently stepped up their settlement activities, and that action had been universally condemned. On many occasions in the past year, the Security Council had considered the issue of the occupied territories, most recently when it had adopted resolution 694 (1991) dealing with deportation of civilians.

14. A country under foreign occupation was always oppressed politically and exploited economically. No matter how much pressure the international community tried to exert, the protection of the human rights of inhabitants of the occupied territories would depend largely on the good will and cooperation of the occupying Power.

15. China had from the start advocated a reasonable settlement of the Middle East issue on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The occupied Arab territories should be returned to the Palestinian and other Arab peoples, the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people should be restored and the sovereignty and security of all the countries in the region, including Israel, should be respected and guaranteed. Of late, various parties involved had entered into negotiations to settle the issue fairly, and his Government supported those endeavours. It hoped that the parties concerned would seize the opportunity and adopt a practical and flexible attitude that would allow the negotiations to achieve positive results.

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16. Mr. SIKKANDER (Sri Lanka) and Mr. AN Myong Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, had they been present at the Committee's 25th meeting, they would have voted in favour of draft resolutions A/SPC/46/L.12 to L.22 under agenda item 72.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.